

APPROVED 12/07/2005

At 6:10 pm the meeting was called to order. Present were Selectmen Gene Cordes, Donald Gates Jr, and Peter Bolduc; and Heidi Carlson.

Jason Whittet from Comcast Cable met with the Selectmen. He had come specifically to review the process for renewal of the cable contract, which is to be done in Fremont no later than January of 2008, when the current contract expires.

He gave some basic history of cable, indicating that it started in the 1940's through an antenna service. In the early 70's HBO started, being the signal, which created signals, with thousands of "Mom and Pop" cable companies, as technology increased and it became big business, many of them merged. There are probably 20 or so cable companies operating in New England. Now, in addition to cable, they also provide internet and telephone services.

Because the cable goes over the right-of way over the poles, cable companies needed to negotiate for use of that space with towns. In 1984, Congress got involved in the franchise contract and definitions. Towns have the right to charge a franchise fee of up to 5% of the gross revenues. This is charged directly back to the consumers as a fee on their bill.

Most agreements are 10 years, Fremont's is currently 20. Some towns have franchise fees, some don't, the same as public access. These things all come up in the renegotiation process. Whittet said he would provide to the Board the number of subscribers in Fremont and amount of revenue generated.

Selectmen said they know there is interest in having public access, but that to date only a few tapes have been broadcast from the Exeter office. Whittet said that the current cost of running this line for a live feed would have to be recalculated. All of these costs are spread back to subscribers over the life of the contract.

He said most people do not make a decision on contract renewals until the end of the current contract. He said the process can be as short or as long as necessary to get a new contract arrangement done. He indicated that Fremont was looking plenty far ahead by beginning the process now. Selectmen indicated they thought a committee would be put together as well, to look at the Town's needs and wants for a renewal.

Whittet said he needed to get cost estimates for any needed improvements within the contract. If the Town is considering public access, it would require a volunteer to man the camera. He said that there is plenty of opportunity for training to do that, and then a tape can be broadcast. If you want to go live, it would require far more capital cost outlay.

The cost for any new improvements will be cost out to consumers prorated over 10 years of the life of the new contract. A new contract needs to be signed prior to January 2008.

He indicated that they will file a form 626 to go to an independent arbitrator if a contract cannot be reached. He said that they file the form to protect their formal rights. He said they want to have a good relationship with the Town and want to work with us for a renewal contract.

Questions were asked about the advertising channels, and Whittet said that the channel and programming setup is not part of the negotiation process for a renewal contract. He did outline the process of how channels are put into the lineup. With regard to programming issues, Whittet explained that with some of the channels come bundled with other channels and you cannot have one without the rest. He said that Congress is looking at these issues now, and considering some "a la cart" type cable services.

He said that every station on cable, they have to pay for, so subscriber rates do not go directly into Comcast's pocket.

Whittet said the 626 letter will be sent to the Town, with financial information and subscriber information along with a draft contract for the Selectmen to review.

There was discussion about the cost of Fremont rate payers, as they are higher than any other town listed when Fremont receives mailings. In 2008 if we were to stay with Comcast, the rate inequity will be closer than it is now.

There could be additional costs for live broadcast versus an origination point at a certain location. They also look at wiring and cables and any other infrastructure costs.

Within the negotiation process, Comcast contracts with an independent company out of Portsmouth to do the survey and ask a variety of questions about how people like their cable service, what additional local access they may want and what they would pay for it.

Whittet said that because Comcast has invested millions of dollars in plant and facilities here, they will not leave Fremont, but the Selectmen can issue licenses to other agencies. He indicated that this means there is no way that Comcast will ever leave Fremont. Other companies can come in to compete with them, but their plant and equipment are here and will always be here.

There was discussion about business and costs increasing over time.

The survey will not go out until Comcast receives Fremont's "wish list". That process takes a few months.

Whittet suggested holding an ascertainment hearing (public hearing) to give people notice to come and share their thoughts on any part of the cable process. He asked for a couple of weeks of notice of the hearing. It was thought this may be done next summer. Whittet said he will attend and answer questions from the public.

At 7:00 pm Department Heads Richard Butler and Neal Janvrin were present. Mr Whittet left the meeting at this time.

Chief Janvrin gave Selectmen a copy of his letter received this week from Senator Barnes. He would like the Selectmen to contact fellow Selectmen and offer their support of the bill, and have Selectmen also send a letter of support to Barnes. The new proposed legislation deals with a small portion of traffic tickets being returned to the Towns.

Janvrin said a few weeks ago he had eight officers in court all day on a Tuesday. Janvrin said this is a scheduling problem, and that the court is generally overburdened.

Janvrin discussed the Witham water line project on Main Street, in that the town line marker was removed. The town sign was removed and Witham said he would repair the damage to it in the spring. Carlson had asked Dick Rand to remove the wooden frame so that it was not further damaged, to be replaced in the spring.

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Janvrin discussed emails received from Randy Grasso regarding speed on Beede Hill Road. Gates suggested that perhaps the large speed enforcement sign may help, and that possibly Janvrin consider that again for Town Meeting (with the grant still available).

The Police Department has been doing active patrols on Beede Hill Road.

Janvrin said that Tom Clivio has resigned and that he wants to start the posting process. A copy of this letter was received today. Selectmen today acknowledged receipt of the letter. Motion was made by Gates to accept his letter, seconded by Bolduc. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.

Janvrin said he felt he needed to hire a part-time officer to replace Clivio. He indicated he had a candidate who is certified, but has not been part of the hiring process before. Selectmen said that the position should be posted in accordance with the Town's policy, and said Janvrin should do that as soon as possible to get it moving ahead.

Bolduc inquired about the Davis property, and Janvrin said no action has been taken to remove the junk cars. Janvrin said that he will be serving summonses there.

Richard Butler submitted a letter to the Selectmen for acceptance of the utility truck for the portion that was purchased by the Fremont Firemen's Association. Motion was made to accept this property by Gates and seconded by Bolduc. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.

Bolduc said that Guerwood Holmes was having trouble with a culvert on Beede Road near Poplin Drive. He asked if the Fire Department could use one of the older trucks to see if they could flush the culvert out to avoid having to dig up the entire road. Butler said he would talk to Holmes about helping out in this situation.

At 7:30 pm Kyle Murdock met with the Selectmen. Selectmen recapped the issues surrounding the formation and changes of the Rescue Squad, from the period since 1984.

Murdock said that he understood the issues outlined in the Board's letter, and understood that there were different fashions about how people were appointed or elected (by the body of the organization). (Referring to town-elected positions versus those which are appointed, not specific to RSA 154).

Murdock said he has not talked with other rescue members about this, that he wanted to wait until meeting with the Selectmen before seeing how the other members feel about the organizational structure (as it pertains to town employees and the "hiring" process).

Murdock said that his understanding is that chief executive authorizes how someone is chosen (appointment, voted by the body, voted by the membership). He likened this to how the Road Agent is chosen (currently by election).

Murdock said that right now the big issue for the Rescue Squad is the combination with the Fire Department. He said this is a huge issue for the Rescue Squad. He feels that for the Rescue to be "enveloped" by the Fire Department, that Rescue members should be more involved in the process.

He felt it was unfortunate that more rescue members were not at the meeting held at the Town Hall in September. Several members of the Rescue Squad were in training that night. He said that he felt some members of the committee went into the fact finding study with a predetermined notion about the end result.

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Murdock feels that this issue (combination) will not work in Fremont. He said there are a lot of political issues within the fire department. He said in an all medical department, you are there at the level you are at because of your training. The highest trained medical person is in charge. It does not necessarily happen that way in a fire company.

In Fremont, the Fire Department is organized such that the Selectmen appoint the Chief (upon recommendation of the body) and the Chief appoints the officers and members, with approval in the hiring process by the Board of Selectmen. Selectmen said that they feel at some point the issue does need to go to the voters.

Murdock said that the departmental-elected president should be the person appointed by the Board of Selectmen. (Currently this is the Rescue President).

Murdock said that his term was due to be up this year. There was an interim special meeting to review the Rescue Squad bylaws. This resulted in a change to eliminate the term limit for the president. There was discussion about how the meetings were managed and when the votes were taken.

In response to a question, Murdock said that he did not feel there was any benefit to a combined department. He said that unless you are on both departments, the two agencies are not really related. He highlighted the fact that there are many areas the departments need to work together. He said that many of the leadership of the fire department are not rescue members currently.

Murdock feels that it could work with the proper hierarchy of leadership. He said that he feels that people are thinking of it from the wrong point of view

Selectmen thanked Murdock for coming in to talk with them about this issue, and that they appreciated his candor about the whole issue.

Selectmen said they wanted to do some more homework and get back to Murdock next week. Murdock was next scheduled for 7:30 pm on Thursday December 15, 2005.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Selectmen reviewed the minutes for 22 November 2005. Motion was made by Bolduc and seconded by Gates to approve them as written. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.
2. The Sandown Road bridge work is complete except for some repointing which will need to be done next summer when water levels are low. Guerwood Holmes has asked for Board members to do a final inspection of the work. Members will get out there individually to look at the work.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Selectmen reviewed and approved the payroll manifest \$19,930.12; accounts payable manifest \$237,644.65; and a manual manifest for Line of Credit (TAN) repayment in the amount of \$1,915,928.43.
2. Selectmen reviewed and approved a tax deferral for \$581 on parcel 07-057. It was signed and a copy forwarded to the Tax Collector.
3. Selectmen drafted and signed a letter to Chief Janvrin.
4. Complaints came in during first snowstorm on Thanksgiving day about the condition of Rislove's Way and Governor's Forest. Letters and phone calls made to both developers to notify them of obligation

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to care for those roads. Letters have been sent out to the remainder of private roads for snow removal contact information. The Town is caring for the Tuck Woods Phase II roads, Susan's Way, and Kenniston Lane for the \$2.00 per foot fee charged on private roads.

5. Selectmen reviewed and signed abatement forms for Cornerstone Estates subdivision conservation lands in the total amount of \$43.00 for lots 01-038, 01-035.08 01-035.09. The value of these lots is inherent in the house lots within the subdivision. Thre forms were signed

6. change Board meeting from Thursday December 8th to Tuesday or Wednesday

7. The annual holiday party is scheduled for Monday December 12, 2005 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

8. Shirkin Road

9. letter from Dan Daley complaining about business at 14 Cavil Mill Road; follow-up for a similar business at 10 Cavil Mill road

10. Tuck Woods bond release

BUDGETS

Town Clerk

Tax Collector

Rescue

Government Buildings

Personnel Administration

Patriotic Purposes

NEXT WEEK

The Budget Committee meets at 7:00 pm on Tuesday December 6, 2005

The next regular Board meeting will be held on Thursday December 8, 2005 at 6:00 pm.

With no further business to come before the board, motion was made by Bolduc and seconded by Gates to adjourn the meeting at __ pm. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson

Town Administrator